

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 QUITO 000468

SIPDIS

NOFORN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/25/2014

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [EC](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENCY MINISTER WORKING TO KEEP GOE ON TRACK

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires A.I., Arnold Chacon. Reason 1.4 (b&d)

1. (S) Summary: On February 25 CDA followed up on earlier calls to GOE presidential minister Carlos Polit to assure that the GOE took action to keep FARC suspects in custody. Polit assured the CDA that the GOE would do so, and understood the importance for GOE anti-terrorist cooperation. On other issues, Polit acknowledged recent political mis-steps, signaled more cabinet changes, and said president Gutierrez' commitment to dialogue with the opposition was real. He said president Gutierrez had been impressed with OAS SecGen candidate Paco Flores during a February 24 meeting. End Summary.

GOE Doing Right on FARC

2. (S) CDA invited Polit to breakfast on February 25 to follow up on an earlier call to congratulate the GOE for the arrest of a dozen FARC on February 23 in Quito. He also emphasized the importance of protecting the GOE police anti-terror unit, which had developed the intelligence for the successful operation, from political interference. Polit said he had spoken personally with president Gutierrez about the imperative of continued anti-terror cooperation with Colombia and the U.S.

President Losing Patience with Opposition

3. (C) Polit said Gutierrez was losing patience with opposition tactics to pressure the GOE and Congress to act on the court issue. He singled out civil society leader Cesar Montufar for special scorn, and requested USG assistance to get Montufar to drop confrontational tactics such as the ongoing "honk to change the court" campaign outside Congress. Montufar's actions, and his reluctance to enter into dialogue with the GOE on the court issue, were clearly an indication of his own political aspirations, Polit asserted. Polit worried that the opposition's goal was to provoke the GOE to over-react in an authoritarian manner. This strategy was strengthening the hand of hard-liners in the GOE, making it harder to convince Gutierrez to pursue political compromise.

4. (C) CDA defended USG support to NGOs working to strengthen democratic institutions, such as Montufar's Citizens Participation group, and said it would continue. He suggested that the Foreign Ministry's request for an official USG response to alleged use of AID funds for the February 16 protest march was not helpful. Montufar has assured us that he had been misquoted by press; he had made clear that no USG funding was used for the protest march.

Political Mis-steps Worsen Situation

5. (C) Polit acknowledged that the GOE had hurt itself politically in recent days. The arrest and subsequent release of General Gallardo (SepTel) had been a blunder. Supreme Court president Guillermo Castro had acted on fugitive ex-president Bucaram's behest. Minister of Government Ledesma had dropped the ball. The case would resurface to cause the GOE more damage, he predicted. Similarly, the move against the Jesuit charity had been a fiasco. President of Congress Omar Quintana was losing control of Congress. In response to the CDA's expressed concern about corruption allegations against the president's brother, Polit said Gilmar Gutierrez was naive and being used by others.

Commitment to Dialogue is Real

6. (C) Polit said Gutierrez' commitment to political dialogue with the opposition was real. Polit, Ledesma and Gutierrez himself were eager to begin that dialogue, and willing to "put everything on the table." (We later relayed this information to Montufar, who said only that he would ponder the offer.) Recognizing the need for conciliation, Gutierrez had agreed to fire controversial Social Welfare Minister Antonio Vargas and his confrontational Undersecretary Bolivar Gonzalez shortly.

Gutierrez Impressed with Flores

17. (C) Polit said Gutierrez had spent two hours with visiting former Salvadoran president Flores, and had been very impressed. Should Chilean candidate Insulza drop out after first-round voting, the GOE would give Flores serious consideration. In light of the meeting, Polit expressed understanding of USG support for Flores, and thanked the Ambassador for her continued engagement with president Gutierrez on this matter.

Comment

18. (C) Polit is a lonely voice of reason in an embattled government, and an ally on key USG interests. He said the president was anxious to meet with the Ambassador on these issues, perhaps to add further balance to his circle of advisors. We are encouraging the opposition to engage with Polit first, to explore possibilities for dialogue on the court issue. Polit's read-out of Gutierrez' meeting with Flores tracks with Flores' own to PolChief on February 24. Polit and FM Zuquilanda have cautioned, however, that newfound enthusiasm over Flores' candidacy would come into play only if Insulza does not reach the second round of voting.
Chacon